No. 46. Dives and Lazarus.

Luke 16, 22d and 23d Verses.

The beggar died, and was carried by the Angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried. And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.

The parable from which these words are taken, contains many useful lessons of instruction. To the rich, who abound with wealth, and are happy in their independence, it suggests the uncertainty of their possessions, the termination of their power, the reckonings of futurity—to the poor, who are distressed with want and afflicted with misery, it administers the balm of comfort, the consolations of hope, the joys of heaven. But it displays not "the terrors of the Lord" to the rich, because God has given them abundance, nor does it promise blessings to the poor, because He has not, in his all-wise dispensations, permitted "their cup to overflow." No, as each shall conduct himself in the sphere in which he is

ordained to move, he is the object of punishment or reward.

"There was a certain rich man, who was "cloathed in purple and fine linen, and fared sump= "tuously every day. And there was a certain beg= "gar, named Lazarus, laid at his gate, full of "sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which "fell from the rich man's table." The character of each is drawn in lively colours and in exact propor= tions, with a beautiful view of the light of virtue, and a solemn contrast of the shade of vice. The dif= ference between their circumstances and situation is not more visible than the qualities of their minds, and the endowments of their hearts. The rich man "had received his good things," and he enjoyed them without once looking up to the Author of them. He posseſsed wealth, but he reflected not for what end it was given him. He considered it his own, and that he was not accountable for the distribution of it. "Whatsoever his eyes desired, he kept not from them,

"he withheld not his heart from any joy;" the magnificence of dress, the distinction of equipage, the luxuries of dissipation; these enchained his attention, and engrossed his soul. "He lived to himself." Unmindful of his rank in society, he provided for the gratification of his desires, without giving himself leisure to reflect on the afflictions and the wants of others, and how easily he might, by his attentions and his bounty, have assuaged and relieved them. "How-"beit he meant not so, neither did his heart think so." Wrapt up in the indulgence of his wishes, he sacrificed the calls of kindness, and the feelings of humanity, to their false security and delusive enjoyment. Whereas had he looked into himself—had he considered whence he came, and whither he was going—had he attended to the dispensations of Providence, and enquired "who "made him to differ from another, and of what he "was possessed that he had not received from God"—had he examined his heart, by what eminence of merit and distinction of goodness he was entitled to such

superiority of station, the natural result would have been, that he would have looked upon himself as accountable for the distribution of his riches, and that the way of employing them most acceptable to their benevolent Author, was relieving the distressed, comforting the afflicted, "strengthening the weak hands "and supporting the feeble knees." The Scripture indeed affords no room for conjecture that the rich man was either hard-hearted, cruel, or unjust. It presents us with a more awful view. "He lifted up his eyes, "being in torments"—why? because he had passed his days as an useless member of society—because, instead of having acted a distinguished part on the theatre of life, he contented himself with the negative merit of merely appearing on the stage, when he might, by his exertions, have contributed to the happy conclusion and the brilliant success of the drama. Exempt from trouble, immersed in pleasure, he sits down cloathed in purple and fine linen, with all that wealth can purchase, grandeur boast, and taste adorn—he sits

down to a table richly spread with all the produce of seasons and of climates, equally calculated to captivate the eye as to gratify the palate.

In the midst of this voluptuousness, "a certain "beggar, named Lazarus, came and laid at his "gate, full of sores, desiring to be fed with the "crumbs which fell from the rich man's table." But intent only on the accommodation of his company, the splendor of his appearance, the dignity of his station, the unhappy Lazarus lies unpitied, unheeded, a prey to the pinchings of hunger, and the corrodings of disease. Whilst he is suffering from the cravings of appetite and the pain of his sores——between the hopes of relief and the dread of disappointment, he perceives, within the gate, every one emulously active to contribute his proportion towards the pomp or convenience of his master. In such a state of pain, of suspence, and apprehension, how natural that reflections like these should arise in his mind!

"For what end was I born, and for what

" purpose was I sent into the world! The Father of
" mercies doth not willingly afflict his creatures; yet
" he hath emptied upon me the whole Vial of his
" wrath. He has disabled me from earning my
" bread, by grievous sores with which he has afflicted
" my body, and instead of the application of oil and
" wine, to heal my wounds, he withholds the
" hand of compassion from aswaging their pain.
" Tormented as I am with their increasing virulence
" and continued neglect, the appetite of hunger urges
" with importunity for instant gratification. All
" I desire of this rich man, or of his dependents, are
" only the crumbs which fall from his table. But
" my request, modest as it is, is refused. Eating
" bread to the full themselves, they do not feel for me,
" who am even hard at death's door, and unless some
" one has compassion on me, shall soon be delivered
" from all my trouble. May God in his mercy
" put an end to my sufferings and my life together!
" Though he has singled me out as the object of his

" chastisement here, the marks of his displeasure will
" not, I trust, accompany me beyond the grave.
" Who knoweth but, wretched as I am now, He will
" soon receive me to himself, and amply recompense
" me for all my sufferings? Who knoweth but He
" will soon change my mourning into joy, and con-
" vey me to that blessed abode, where tears are wiped
" from every face, where there is no more crying,
" neither sorrow nor pain? This confidence in his
" goodness, this trust in his mercy, has supported
" me under a burthen, otherwise too heavy to be born.
" But continual neglect, violent pain, and un-
" satisfied hunger have, at length, with slow and cruel
" deliberation, almost deprived me of a miserable and
" wretched existence."

Unhappy Lazarus! thou wert despised on earth, and thy accumulated sorrows met with no alleviation; but after thou hadst fallen a victim to their power, thou receivedst for thy reward, " a weight, an exceeding
" and eternal weight of Glory." Thou patiently sub-

mittedst to thy grievous lot, and thou now lookest back with pleasure on the virtues, with the exercise of which thou wert so severely tried. Thy soul escaping from this prison of clay, found a refuge in Abraham's bosom, where it will be eternally preserved from the mortification of disappointment, from the insults of reproach, and the distraction of despair.

Did the same blessings await the rich man? Did his splendid dress, magnificent table, ostentatious equipage, afford him comfort on the bed of death? Did he enjoy the reflection, the animating reflection, that he had considered the wants and relieved the necessities of the poor, that he had lived a life of virtue and piety—and that having acted the part of a steward in which he had been ruler over many things, his accounts were made up—so fairly stated and so accurately balanced—that he only waited their examination to receive an approving discharge? But so far from having accounts made ready, he never considered that he had any to be passed—he never considered that he was accountable to God—

but that his riches, fatal deluſion! were gotten by his own hand, and by his own might. If then he died, as he had lived, in a ſtate of inſenſibility—— if he paſsed out of this world as he had continued in it, without reflecting on the relation in which he ſtood to God and to ſociety, what a tranſition in his circumſtances! what an inſtant change from power to ſubmiſsion, from mirth to mourning, from diſſipation to deſpair! In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments! If on the other hand he reflected, that as he had no claim to ſuch diſtinction of ſtation, his rank, and conſequence, and ſuperiority were aſſigned him on the expreſs condition that he ſhould act the part of God's vicegerent in comforting the afflicted, relieving the diſtreſsed, and exciting all by the prevalence of his example, and the perſuaſion of his advice, to fear and obey the great God of Heaven and Earth—— what muſt have been his diſtraction and horror? His ſoul muſt have felt that "fearful looking-for of judg-
"ment and fiery indignation," before he was plunged

into its misery. Dreadful foretaste! He must have laid on his last bed, anticipating the eternity of misery which awaited him, and instead of deriving comfort from the reflection of his wealth, he must have heartily wished he had never possessed it. How dreadful must have been the thoughts of meeting the Author of his abundance, feeling himself obnoxious to His wrath? Existing in this deplorable state, in this miserable condition, he is called to realize those horrors which were painted by his imagination, and anticipated by his conscience. "In hell he lifted up his "eyes, being in torments." In hell! the abode of wicked spirits, between which and the mansions of the blessed, there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who would escape their punishment cannot—neither can those who are happy go to alleviate, no not even with a drop of water, the torments of the damned. See in this place of torment, the portion of him who, not long ago, was cloathed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day! How had he incurred

such punishment? Not, I again repeat it, not because he had been cruel, unjust, or impious. No; because he had centered his happiness in the gratification of his wishes; because he had led a life of indolence, of thoughtlessness and dissipation. May the alarming reflection suggest to every one of such a character the necessity of an useful, of a virtuous, and religious life! May the alarming reflection induce all those who are blessed with this world's goods to acquaint themselves with the distresses and afflictions of their needy brethren! May it induce those "who have goods laid up for many years, "not to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, "who hath given them all things so richly to enjoy!"

"The beggar died, and was carried by the "Angels into Abraham's bosom." He was translated from earth to heaven; not because he had been in want of the comforts and the necessaries of life; not because he had been the prey of disease and of wretchedness. No; because his poverty had not tempted him "to steal, and take the name of his God in vain;"

because, tho' he had been poor and needy, he "had "waited patiently the Lord's leisure, knowing that "all things would, in the end, work together," under the direction of Providence, "for his good."

How useful an admonition does the Parable, thus considered, suggest to the two different states of rich and poor?

Since happiness is the object of all men, and since riches are desired for the sake of promoting happiness, let those who are blessed with them be careful, lest, in the fulness of their sufficiency, they be tempted to say—"who is "the Lord?" Let them rather frequently have God in their thoughts, and consider their additional obligations to worship and fear Him. Let them often reflect, that riches take wing and flee away, and that they are at all times at the disposal of Him who entrusted them to their care—who entrusted them, not that their possessors should use them as tho' they were absolutely their own—not that their possessors should become independent of Him "who maketh poor and "maketh rich." Let the rich man never forget, that if

his riches were transferred to another, all the respect, and adulation, and homage that are paid to him, would be transferred together with them. And it would be well, if he would deign sometimes to divest himself, in idea, of his wealth and property, and consult his conscience whether, as a man, he is entitled to the esteem and respect of his neighbours and fellow-citizens; or whether, if he were not a rich man, he would not be universally and openly the object of derision, contempt, and of abhorrence? Let him consult his feelings in what manner the neglect, the caprice, the insolence his riches may, in his own opinion, authorize him to shew to others, would be received, if their stations were reversed, by himself? Let the rich man, above all, consider that he is one day to stand at God's Tribunal, without the protection of wealth and the influence of authority—that he is there to give a strict and solemn account how he has employed his riches, and whether he has made them conducive to the comfort of men, and the glory of God?

Whether by his exemplary conduct and diffusive cha-
rities, he has promoted the cause of Christianity, and
the salvation of mankind? And that in that, tremen-
dous day, he may stand before God with humble confi-
dence, let him be perswaded to wean his affections from
the things of this life, to set them upon things above,
and by abundant charities, fervent prayer, and de-
vout deportment, endeavor to obtain an inheritance
" where neither moth nor rust can destroy, and where
" thieves cannot break through nor steal."

Let the poor man, instead of murmuring at the
station Providence has allotted him, comfort himself
with the reflection, that his Poverty, if he be virtuous,
will soon be succeeded by blessings too great for the
tongue to express, or the heart to conceive. Let him,
since it has pleased the Almighty to deprive him of
many of the comforts of this life, endeavor to secure
happiness in the next, those joys unspeakable, and
full of Glory, which will be the reward of patient
continuance in well-doing. When Poverty, " that

"sore evil," presses hard upon him, let him remember that to remove it, by either deceit or dishonesty, is directly to oppose the administration of Providence—— for God, if it seems fit, will either make a way for his relief, or will abundantly reward him for his patience. Let him testify, by his civility, meekness, quietness, that he is deserving of the countenance, of the kindness, and charity of his superiors. Let him be careful not to squander what he earns in rioting and drunkenness, but let him endeavor to provide for his family as becomes his station.

And may both rich and poor constantly reflect upon the future life, both of happiness and misery, which awaits us; that "if we have done good, we shall "go into life everlasting, and if we have done evil, into "everlasting fire!"

God impress the awful thought so strongly upon our minds, that in every thing we think, and say, and do, we may prepare ourselves against the dreadful day of trial!

Theoph^s. J. St. John.

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The Author, having now published all the discourses he intends at present, 52, desires respectfully to return his thanks to those Clergymen who have so liberally encouraged him to proceed in the publication. He was still more encouraged by hearing that, in many Parishes, where his MSS. have been already preached, the congregations and communicants are rapidly increasing. His sermons do not consist of moral essays or philosophical disquisitions, because he attributes to such perverted preaching the total ignorance of Christianity, the lukewarmness of sentiment, and degeneracy of conduct by which so very many, who profess themselves members of our church, are unhappily distinguished. He is fully persuaded that every conscientious Clergyman who may do him the honour to use them, when he is to give an account of his preaching, will find himself to have been, in the hands of Providence, the blessed instrument "of converting many from the error of their ways."